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**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONFLICT INTERACTION
IN RUSSIA AND IN THE NETHERLANDS**

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Abstract

Emotions influence on conflict process as well as on strategies of conflict management. Research has shown that emotional intelligence as an ability to understand and regulate emotions is related to conflict resolution strategies. This relation is mediated by cultural norms of conflict resolution. There is little research focused on the relation between emotional intelligence and preferences in dealing with conflict ways in various cultures. The purpose of the study was to investigate relations between emotional intelligence and preferences of dealing with conflict ways in two cultural contexts: Russia and the Netherlands. "Behavioural scenarios" questionnaire, developed for this study by Sinelnikova and Wigboldus, was applied to measure preferences in ways of dealing with conflict, SREIT was applied to measure emotional intelligence. 146 Russian students (M=20.15; 59.6% female, 39% male, 2 participant did not indicate their sex) and 125 Dutch students (M=21.62; 66.4% female, 33.6 % male) participated in the study. Results have shown that both Russian and Dutch participants scored relatively high on feelings and position expression and integrating, had moderate scores on acknowledgment of partners' feelings and position, and had low scores on blaming and irony. Slight, but significant differences were identified: Dutch participants compared to Russian participants scored higher in direct ways of communication: acknowledgment of partners' feelings and position, feelings and position expression and blaming. Russian participants scored higher than Dutch participants in indirect communication via irony. Emotional intelligence contributed to preferences of feelings and position expression in both samples, and to preferences of integration in Russian sample.

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1. Introduction

In conflict process participants experience intense emotions, mostly negative. These emotions influence on their psychological well-being, productiveness, and intergroup relations in short-term and long-term prospective. Rispens and Demerouti (2016) have shown that daily conflicts at work are related to negative emotions experience on the day of the conflict and lead to decline in productiveness on the day after the conflict due to experience of guilt and sadness. Parents involved in destructive interparental conflict did not support their child when he or she expressed fear, anger, or sadness (Lee & Brophy-Herb, 2018).

Emotions not only accompany conflict process, but influence on conflict resolution strategies. Posthuma (2012) concludes, based on 5 empirical studies, that different emotions, experiences by participants of the conflict, have complex and various relations with conflict management strategies. Lu et al. (2020) have shown via experiments with Chinese participants and participants from Western countries that positive emotions experience in case of their acceptance can protect participant from destructive reaction to intergroup provocation. On the other hand, if positive emotions experienced in conflict are rejected by the participant, they strengthen negative reactions toward outgroup members. A cognitive mechanism providing acceptance of positive emotions in conflict is dialectical thinking, acceptance of controversies.

Timely identification of negative emotions is an additional challenge in conflict interaction. Sanford (2012) has shown that marital spouses are more effective in soft emotions (sadness, hurt) recognition compared to hard emotions (angry, annoyed) recognition. While hard emotions were successfully identified only in case of their explicit expression, soft emotions were recognized even if they were not expressed (Sanford, 2012). Difficulties in aggressive emotions identification and expression may lead to increase of their intensity and destructive manifestation in conflict.

Winardi et al. (2021) based on studies conducted in different cultures suggest that emotional intelligence, ability to identify, understand, use, and regulate emotions (Mayer et al., 1999) is one of the key personal factors of conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence was positively related to active strategies of conflict resolution: integration, compromise, obliging, dominating, and negatively associated with avoiding conflict in nurses in Turkey (Basogul & Ozgur, 2016) and in nursing students in Hong Kong (Chan et al., 2014). Moeller and Kwantes (2015) have shown that emotional intelligence strengthen relation between aggressive behaviour in conflict preferences and aggressive behaviour in conflict, which indicates that emotional intelligence contributes to behaviour regulation, and is not prosocial construct per se.

Chen et al. (2019) have found that emotional intelligence's impact in conflict was dependent of situational factors. Chinese managers effectively regulated and used their emotions in conflicts with high power and equal status colleagues, which contributed to avoiding, integrating, and obliging in conflict. Emotion identification was positively related to obliging in conflict with high power and equal colleagues, use of emotions was positively related to compromise irrespective of colleague's status. Gunkel et al. (2016) conducted a cross-cultural study on relations between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution strategies with student participants from different regions. Results have shown that

emotional intelligence is related to compromise, integrating, and obliging. No relation was found between emotional intelligence and avoiding, and dominating strategies (Gunkel et al., 2016).

To sum up, results indicate that emotional intelligence and its' components are related to conflict resolution preferences in different cultures and suggest that relation between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution is mediated by sociocultural norms of conflict interaction. Sunindijo and Hadikusumo (2014) address this problem and relate specificities of emotional intelligence's impact in conflict with sociocultural norms of conflict resolution in Thai culture. Project managers and engineers with high emotional intelligence relatively often apply accommodating strategy of conflict resolution in consistent with harmony oriented social norms of Thai culture. At the same time, they are comfortable with applying integration to satisfy interests of both parties, which is contrary to sociocultural norms of conflict resolution in Thai culture.

2. Problem Statement

Research has shown that emotional intelligence is related to conflict resolution strategies and this relation is moderated by sociocultural norms. However, research on emotional intelligence's relationship to the ways of dealing with conflicts is limited. It is still unclear, if emotional intelligence's relationship to the ways of dealing with conflicts is universal or culture specific.

3. Research Questions

Is emotional intelligence related to the ways of dealing with conflict? Are there any differences in preferences of dealing with conflict ways in Russia and in the Netherlands? What are the similarities and differences in emotional intelligence's impact on conflict interaction preferences in Russian and Dutch cultural contexts?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate relations between emotional intelligence and preferences of dealing with conflict ways in two cultural contexts: Russia and the Netherlands.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Method

Behaviour Scenarios Questionnaire (Wigboldus, Sinelnikova) was applied to study preferences in ways of dealing with conflict. The questionnaire was developed by representatives of two culture contexts: Dutch and Russian. Situations have been selected and adapted to fit both cultural contexts and discussed by members of "Behaviour Sciences" research group in Radboud University Nijmegen. Participants were presented with the description of 4 conflict situations: with equal and high-power partner in business and interpersonal context and situation-specific ways of communication: express one's feelings and position, acknowledgment of partner's feelings and interests, propose solution considering

both partner's interests (integrating), blame the partner, irony. Participants were asked to evaluate on a 7-point scale if they recommend the hero to behave this way in the situation (1 – not at all; 7 – of course he should behave this way). SREIT (Schutte et al., 1998) was applied to measure emotional intelligence. We asked participants to evaluate their agreement with every item on 7-point scale.

5.2. Participants

146 Russian students (59.6% female, 39% male, 2 participants did not indicate their sex, M=20.15) and 125 Dutch students (66.4% female, 33.6% male, M=21.62) participated in the study. Dutch students studied in Radboud University, Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Russian students studied in ITMO University and Saint-Petersburg State Institute of Culture in Saint-Petersburg, Russia. Dutch students indicated that Dutch is their mother language, as well as Russian students indicated that Russian is their mother language. Students participated in the study for course credits. The study took about 25 minutes.

6. Findings

SPSS-17 was applied for statistical processing. The normality of the distribution according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion was checked. If the variable had normal distribution, we applied T-Student criteria, otherwise we applied U-Manna-Whitney criterion to test differences between Russian and Dutch groups in preferences in ways of dealing with conflict. Descriptive statistics and results of T-Student and U-Manna-Whitney analyses are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Preferences in conflict communication in Russian and Dutch cultural contexts

Preferences in ways of dealing with conflict	M Russian Students	M Dutch Students	Criteria	P-Value
acknowledgment of partner's feelings and interests	14.68	16.91	T=4.45	p<0.001
feelings and position expression	21.95	23.66	U=7367	p<0.05
integrating	19.39	18.72	-	-
blaming	11.75	13.37	T=2.89	p<0.01
irony	9.55	8.06	U=7183.5	p<0.01

SREIT scores are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Emotional intelligence in Russian and Dutch cultural context

	M Russian Students	M Dutch Students
Emotional intelligence SREIT scores	158.39	157.58

Regression analyses was run to test relations between emotional intelligence and preferences in ways of dealing with conflict in Russian and Dutch sample. Results are described in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Emotional intelligence and preferences in ways of dealing with conflict preferences in the Russian sample (Regression)

Preferences in ways of dealing with conflict	β	R-square	P-Value
feelings and position expression	0.3	0.09	$p < 0.001$
integration.	0.42	0.18	$p < 0.001$

Table 4. Emotional intelligence and preferences in ways of dealing with conflict preferences in the Dutch sample (Regression)

Preferences in ways of dealing with conflict	β	R-square	P-Value
feelings and position expression	0.249	0.062	$p < 0.01$
irony	-0.22	0.048	$p < 0.05$

7. Conclusion

The study has revealed similarities in preferences of dealing with conflict ways in Russian and Dutch sample. Both Russian and Dutch participants scored relatively high on feelings and position expression and integrating, had moderate scores on acknowledgment of partners' feelings and position, and had low scores on blaming and irony. Slight, but significant differences were revealed. Dutch participants compared to Russian participants scored higher in direct ways of communication: acknowledgment of partners' feelings and position, feelings, and position expression, and blaming. Russian participants scored higher than Dutch participants in indirect communication via irony. Results indicate that Dutch students compared to Russian students prefer open discussion in conflict considering interests of all parties. Russian students compared to Dutch students prefer to psychologically distance from the conflict situation via irony, which indicates internal emotional conflict (Zinchenko et al., 2017). One of the possible underlying mechanisms may be that Dutch students compared to Russian students might feel more comfortable in conflict situation due cultural differences in relation to conflicts and their participants.

Emotional intelligence contributed to preferences of feelings and emotions expression in conflicts in both samples. Participants with higher scores in emotional intelligence were more open in conflict discussion and more comfortable of expressing their feelings. One of the possible underlying mechanisms may be that participants with higher scores in emotional intelligence are more conscious about their emotions and regulate them more effectively, therefore it is psychologically easier for them to express them in socially acceptable form. Also, participants with lower scores in emotional intelligence and more difficulties with emotions identifying, understanding and expression avoid emotions' expression in conflict, because they are afraid of outburst of uncomfortable emotions (their own or their partner) or are worried that partner might use their openness to manipulate them.

Emotional intelligence contributed to integration preferences in conflict only in Russian sample. Results indicate that difficulties in emotions identifying, understanding and regulation obstruct conflict's analyses and constructive resolution considering all parties interests in Russian cultural context. Future research directions are related to more detailed study of the role of emotions experience, regulation and

expression in conflicts considering attitudes towards conflict and sociocultural norms of conflict resolution within one cultural context as well as in various cultural contexts.

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